

## Council

4 April 2016

### Member Questions (15 and 1 withdrawn)

<b>1.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Adam Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</b>
	<p>Any newly arriving 'MD of Place and Economic Development ' does not have the necessary background experience of Cheltenham's peculiarly unique road network for a large town for which there is no longer any road-building money to remedy.</p> <p>The MD of the Development Task Force is responsible for 'development' and increase in business rate revenues, not for the viability of the town's traffic circulation and its wider environment. A sensitive and heavily contested scheme demands wider and wiser counsels throughout its implementation.</p> <p>In view of the lengthy controversy over CTP, is it not irresponsible to be restricting all subsequent CTP implementation decisions to two officers and one Cabinet member, rather than to all elected Councillors.</p>
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>The MD of Place and Economic Development is responsible for the Directorate which has had primary responsibility for development and delivery of CBC's input into the Cheltenham Transport Plan and consequently, I believe that he is fully briefed.</p> <p>The MD of the Task Force has also been involved with this project as it impacts upon investment decisions for several major schemes. Securing John Lewis was linked to the decision making process regarding changes to Albion Street for example.</p> <p>I and colleagues at GCC are fully aware of the sensitivity of the Cheltenham Transport Plan which is why it has been subject to lengthy consultation.</p> <p>At the last full Council meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016 there was a full debate on an item relating to the Cheltenham Transport Plan mitigation funding and according to the draft minutes I believe that this issue was fully rehearsed, an additional recommendation made and the following decision recorded.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>4. During the assessment period for each completed construction phase of the CTP, the Highways Authority be requested to report on it and the contents of the next phase.</i></p> <p>I believe that the previous debate fully addressed this question with a vote by full Council – 34 in favour, 2 abstentions and none against.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Louis Savage to Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Jon Walklett</b>
	<p>As a Council we should encourage participation in local democracy, and a key component of this is ensuring good turnout in local elections. What evidence has</p>

	the Cabinet Member seen to suggest that holding 2 yearly local elections, rather than 4 yearly elections like neighbouring local authorities, will decrease 'voter fatigue' and increase political engagement?
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	Turnout at elections depends on a number of factors such as, for example, the type and (when combined) the number of elections being held, publicity and media coverage, the extent of campaigning by candidates and parties and the weather on polling day. However, I know of no evidence that would suggest that for local council elections, the alternatives of four or two year cycles will make a difference to turnout. The preferred frequency of elections might rather depend on a judgement as to the best way to ensure the accountability of local politicians to the voting public and whether an opportunity to show approval or disapproval or change an administration should occur more or less often. Therefore my belief is that by retaining the current 2 year cycle we are offering Cheltenham's electorate more opportunity to express their views than would be the case with a 4 year cycle thus enhancing the local democratic process.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Louis Savage to Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Jon Walklett</b>
	Does a 2 yearly election cycle, rather than a 4 yearly cycle adopted by neighbouring local authorities, increase or decrease Cabinet Members and Councillors ability to make long-term strategic decisions in the best interests of our town?
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	I do not believe so, if the art of politics is about making the best decisions, whatever the timescale involved, and being prepared to defend and be accountable for judgements at the ballot box there seems no reason why a 2 yearly cycle should inhibit or impair long-term strategic decision making. A cynical view might be that a 4 yearly cycle simply allows more time for voters to forget or forgive bad or unpopular decisions made at the beginning of the cycle.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Anne Regan to Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Rowena Hay</b>
	It was resolved at the Cabinet meeting on the 8th March that:- "Authority be delegated to The Managing Director Place & Economic Development to consider in consultation with the Cabinet Member how the £50,000 funding for Tourism should be allocated "
	Can the Cabinet Member give this chamber an update on the number of meetings held so far and what the timescale will be before any positive Tourism objectives will take place?
	Will the salary of the Tourism Manager be part of the 50k?
	What working budget do you envisage to give to the new Tourism Manager?
	Where will the extra working finances come from?
	<b>Response from</b>
	First of all in answering Councillor Regan I would like to point out what the

	<p>recommendations approved actually say. Which is different from the quotation marked paragraph of her question.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To accept the Consultants report.</li> <li>2. To delegate authority to managing director, place &amp; economic development to further consider the delivery plan and the proposed delivery mechanism in consultation with the cabinet member healthy lifestyles.</li> <li>3. To delegate authority to the managing director, place &amp; economic development to consider, in consultation with the cabinet member healthy lifestyles, how the £50,000 funding set aside to support strategic tourism should be allocated.</li> </ol> <p>I am pleased to report that over the last fifteen working days since the 8th of March Cabinet meeting, Tim Atkins has made good progress.</p> <p>The report by Creative Tourist is a strategic tourism document, it gives both a position statement and a direction of travel or 'outcomes proposition'. What it does not do and was never intended to do so, is set out the delivery plan or mechanism. This council has a strong track record of working in partnership and the tourism partnership is a key partner in delivering this Town's strategic tourism, long gone are the days where the council does it all.</p> <p>I have spoken and met with Tim Atkins twice since the 8th to discuss how best to allocate the 50K which is to be used</p> <p>Tim Atkins has had discussions with several of our tourism stakeholders including Cheltenham Business Partnership, the Cheltenham BID shadow board, marketing Gloucester, Cotswold DMO, and the Cheltenham Trust to list a few.</p> <p>Following the above conversations he has drawn up a specification for what we want to achieve with the funding, I expect to see this paper by the end of the week.</p> <p>The appointment of a resource is proposed to be in place by the end of May 2016. One of the first outputs for this resource will be the production of a detailed action plan for the next six months, running through to the end of the year.</p> <p>I am not in a position to answer the last three bullet points as they follow on from the cabinet recommendation two. I am as keen as Councillor Regan to see progress made and would be happy to update her again.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Matt Babbage to Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor John Rawson</b>
	<p>Could I please ask the Cabinet Member for Finance: has Delta House been revalued since its purchase, in preparation for the annual accounts or otherwise, what the valuation amount is, and how this figure has been/will be calculated?</p>
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	Delta Place has not been revalued since its purchase but is one of the properties

	<p>that is due for revaluation by the middle of May. The value will be based on comparable current market rents and yields for offices in Cheltenham.</p> <p>In the light of the increase in rental values the initial indication is that the value of Delta Place will be in the region of £17 million.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Chris Mason to Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor John Rawson</b>
	<p>With regard to the new municipal offices would Cllr Rawson please inform the Council of the latest considerations to build a new office on the shop fitter's site and whether any alternatives to Delta House are being considered?</p>
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>The Council will shortly begin converting the Shopfitters site into a car park which has temporary planning permission for 5 years. No decision as to future alternative uses for Shopfitters has been made but it may be suitable for office or residential development, subject to planning.</p> <p>Cllr Mason will recall that when we considered various options for relocating the council's headquarters, all the new build options, including building new offices on the Shopfitters site, were substantially more costly over a 20 year period than purchasing Delta Place.</p> <p>However, rising rental levels over the past few months certainly increase the attractions of new build as a potential alternative. Another factor that might make new build feasible is if partners, from either the public or the private sector, were to come forward to join us in a development scheme. Therefore, so long as there are still uncertainties about when a move to Delta Place might happen, the council will be flexible enough to consider other opportunities that may arise.</p> <p>If such an opportunity did arise, it would be subject to normal processes and procedures and approvals. Delta Place could then be retained as an investment.</p>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Chris Mason to Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor John Rawson</b>
	<p>Would Cllr Rawson please in a clear and concise manner confirm the rationale to purchase Delta House for £13,750,000, £2,750,000 above the market value as investment with reversion to vacant possession value (10th April 2015)?</p>
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>As Cllr Mason is looking for conciseness and clarity, I will explain our rationale in three simple points, though with some further elaboration of each point.</p> <p><b>1. The benefits of acquiring Delta Place, in terms of its potential for generating income, substantially outweigh the cost.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By purchasing the building, we are guaranteed around £10 million of rental income from the current head lessee over the period 2015-23 – well above market levels. Effectively this will mean that rental income will pay around 72 per cent of the cost of acquiring the building in just eight years.</li> <li>• Over the same period, the income from the building will contribute</li> </ul>

£100,000 net annually to the Council's budget,

- In the longer run, from 2023 onwards, reflecting recent increases in rentals, the council will stand to earn in the region of £1 million a year in rental income from the building if it leases out the entire space and £500,000 a year if roughly half the space is let and the other half occupied by the council itself. If the latter occurs, the purchase will also make it possible to redevelop the Municipal Offices, generating a further income stream.

**2. The investment valuation made by GVA had little relevance to our situation.**

- At a commonsense level, it was unrealistic to expect the owner to part with the building for £11 million when he could have gained an income totalling £10.2 million between 2015 and 2023 just by sitting tight, and still owned the freehold of the building at the end.
- The investment valuation did not fully reflect our aspiration to occupy a large part of the building as our headquarters. Put simply, the building would be worth considerably more to us for owner occupation than if we let it entirely to tenants. This was accepted both by GVA and Doherty Baines as our independent property advisers because (as Doherty Baines expressed it) "an investor will invariably factor in void periods to reflect the risk of re-letting to another occupier...An owner occupier does not incur this cost." In those circumstances GVA estimated the value of Delta Place as £16 million in their addendum to the valuation, a figure which Doherty Baines accepted as reasonable.
- As Doherty Baines pointed out to us: "An opinion of value is by its very nature retrospective – generally a valuer has regard to transactions which have occurred and attempts to extrapolate from that". We were aware that the market for high quality modern office accommodation in Cheltenham was likely to improve considerably in the months to come – and so it has proved.

**3. The independent professional advice we received confirmed that acquiring the building on the terms negotiated was the right thing to do.**

- The Cabinet did not complete the purchase without taking the best available professional advice. After the decision in principle to buy Delta Place, officers consulted an independent real estate consultancy arm of Grant Thornton, who were supported by the leading property consultants Doherty Baines, to ensure that the Council had approached the purchase in the right way and considered the relevant factors.
- The advice Doherty Baines gave us reinforced our view that the investment valuation was not the only consideration in deciding whether £13.75 million was a fair price. As they said in a letter of 16 June 2015: "You have obtained valuation advice as to the amount the owners of Delta Place might be able to obtain in the open market and that advice ranges

	<p>from £10.5m to £12.5m but that advice should not in our opinion have any significant impact on your decision, although a purchaser might use the information to frame a negotiation strategy.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specifically Doherty Baines confirmed that the deal we had negotiated was a good one. They wrote: “There is no compelling reason to believe that CBC would be able to strike a better bargain for another building in the market. We also do not consider that CBC acquiring Delta Place for less than £13.75m is a realistic scenario.”</li> <li>• Crucially Doherty Baines concluded in the same letter that: “the proposed transaction represents the most effective option and that £13.75m is a prudent price for CBC to pay for Delta House in all the circumstances.”</li> </ul> <p><b>It is worth adding that, since the purchase was made, the case for acquiring Delta Place has grown stronger.</b></p> <p>The building is now fully sub-let, disproving the claim by some councillors that we were “buying a building no one wants”. At the same time, market rents for good quality modern office accommodation have increased, which should have a very positive impact on the forthcoming revaluation and could easily make the current disagreement about valuation somewhat academic.</p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Diggory Seacome to Cabinet Member Development and Safety , Councillor Andrew McKinlay</b></p>
	<p>At the last planning committee meeting, an application for another HMO was approved. However the residents of St Pauls had been promised urgent action in January 2013 to regulate this kind of development. The current administration made a promise 'to agree funding to carry out the necessary survey work for introduction and approval of additional licensing and article 4 direction schemes and this was added to the Forward Plan in September 2014.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member explain why this promise has not been delivered? How many more family homes have to be lost to this kind of development before the administration makes good on its promise?</p>
	<p><b>Response from Cabinet Member</b></p>
	<p>Let me be clear from the start. This administration is fully aware of the problems being caused in some wards in the town as a result of the excessive density of Houses in Multiple Occupation, and is committed to finding an effective method of licencing and regulating Houses in Multiple Occupation.</p> <p>As Cllr Seacome points out the Council added a commitment to fund survey work into HMOs into the Forward Plan in September 2014.</p> <p>This was followed by the Cabinet agreeing on 17th March 2015 that a house condition and management survey of the private rented stock should be carried out by consultant surveyors. This is the first stage in the process required to introduce a discretionary Licensing Scheme under housing act legislation and or an Article 4 Direction under Planning Legislation.</p> <p>Delays have occurred for two principal reasons:-</p>

	<p>1. the complexities of overlapping planning and housing issues; and</p> <p>2. the possible extension of mandatory HMO licensing which is likely to be introduced in the autumn.</p> <p>In November 2015, after the Council's tender process had commenced, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) introduced a technical discussion document entitled "Extending Mandatory Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) and related reforms". Provisions in the recent Planning and Housing Bill also contain powers which would allow better identification of HMO stock.</p> <p>The proposed extension to mandatory licensing may replace the identified need to consider 'Additional Licensing' within the six wards that were initially identified for survey.</p> <p>The issue of HMOs, in particular their quality and quantity, was discussed at the cross-party Planning and Liaison Member Working Group on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2015. The working group recommended that the Council allows a period of time to review the effects of the extension to mandatory licensing to assess the effectiveness of the new arrangements prior to considering any planning policy change. As a result the survey work was delayed.</p> <p>In my view it is likely that the extension to the mandatory licensing proposed by the Government will not on its own address the problems of HMOs that we face in Cheltenham, and that further controls will be required.</p> <p>As Council is aware any method to control new HMO accommodation, including Article 4 Directions, needs to be evaluated as part of the Council's overall planning strategy.</p> <p>The emerging Cheltenham Plan provides an opportunity to frame new planning policies and strategies that could help to control numbers and improve the quality of HMO's.</p> <p>In response to the increasing concern of the residents of St Pauls, it is proposed, subject to Cabinet approval, to initiate the survey work associated with the St Pauls and All Saints wards. This will help gain information on the numbers and types of HMOs in the wards in preparation for any extension of mandatory licensing, as well as gain information required to support the use of planning powers if this is required.</p>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Tim Harman to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b></p>
	<p>In 2014 the Borough Councils economic plan was slammed as "not fit for purpose" by independent consultants. We were promised action to improve the Council's strategy and deliver economic growth, yet despite this commitment given by the leader of the Liberal Democrat Administration, two years later our Town is still rudderless and lacking vision.</p> <p>Will the Leader tell us how much longer we have to wait until our Town has a clear plan for the future?</p>

	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>Cllr Harman seems to be a bit confused since the process of commissioning Athey Consulting to advise on a new economic strategy for Cheltenham was commenced because the existing one was now out of date. It was not a shock revelation from the consultants. For the record, the final report from Athey Consulting was published in January 2015, so just over a year ago.</p> <p>The purpose of the report was to help identify key challenges and opportunities and to support these issues for CBC moving forward. This included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking a leadership role – to this end we have appointed to the post of MD Place and Economic Development. A post that will work closely with the Cheltenham Development Task Force which has been widely praised for its work.</li> <li>• Prioritising actions to address employment land shortfall – which is why we are supporting through the JCS the potential release of employment land to the West of Cheltenham and encouraging the development of modern commercial office space; the latter assisted by the recent uplift in rental rates which after several decades starts to make new build a viable proposition. We are also exploring the potential for an Article 4 direction to help resist government policy on the conversion of offices to residential.</li> <li>• We have also been working closely with interested parties on the development of a potential cyber zone which overlaps with the above reference to seeking employment land.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the Cabinet has been actively working with partners to develop the new Tourism Strategy and working with the Cheltenham Business Partnership to support a Business Improvement District currently subject to ballot of businesses in the proposed zone.</p> <p>The Athey report has also been used to inform the emerging Cheltenham local plan and several strands of work have been subject to consultation as part of this.</p>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Tim Harman to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	<p>Will the Leader take this opportunity to reaffirm that the Liberal Democrat Administration Continues to support the County wide devolution bid?</p> <p>Also will he take this opportunity to deny rumours circulating that across the County that his group are considering a Cheltenham Unitary bid with a land grab from Tewkesbury?</p>
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>On behalf of the Cabinet I have taken the lead in discussing the evolving devolution proposals with partners across Gloucestershire. I also encouraged the creation of the Devolution Task Group in Cheltenham to allow wide cross party discussion. Since Cllr Harman is a member of the Task Group he will be aware that there has been a broad consensus in Cheltenham to work to improve the current 2 tier structure. This involves both encouraging devolution of powers from central government but importantly allowing Cheltenham to have more say in decisions such as those relating to highways and street trees currently taken at</p>



	<p>county level. There has also been broad agreement that there is minimal support for the elected mayor option within Gloucestershire. However it seems clear that the current Gloucestershire proposal will not get official government support in 2016.</p> <p>The recent 'Oxfordshire' proposals seem to stem from major disagreements between Conservative politicians in Oxfordshire involving but possibly not limited to the leader of Oxfordshire County Council, the Prime Minister and the leaders of various district councils. While this proposal came as a surprise and does not seem to be fully thought through, it does not mean it or something similar will not happen in due course.</p> <p>Clearly since Cotswold District are part of the 'Oxfordshire' proposals we need to consider the implications for us. I think this should trigger a wider debate over the next few months about all the possible options within Gloucestershire. Based on discussion at the Leadership Gloucestershire meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> March, I am concerned that Gloucestershire County Council now seem to be trying to rush through a Gloucestershire deal by May involving signing up to the elected mayor option. I do not support this approach since it fails to even consider options such as unitary authorities and involves no public consultation. In any case it seems entirely impractical when half the county is now engaged in local elections.</p>
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Tim Harman to Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor John Rawson</b></p>
	<p>This question was withdrawn at the request of Councillor Harman.</p>
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Chris Nelson to Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Rowena Hay</b></p>
	<p>According to well known legend, Cheltenham Spa started its days in 1716, when a spring was discovered by local farmer William Mason in one of his fields, when he saw pigeons pecking at salt deposits on the ground and he realised that a mineral spring lay underneath (the field in question was where the Princess Hall of the Ladies College now stands, between present day Montpellier Street and Bayshill Road). This site was later developed by William Mason's son-in-law, a flamboyant and well travelled Merchant Sea Captain and adventurer, called Captain Henry Skillicorne.</p> <p>We know that the Cheltenham Civic Society are marking this great occasion with a dinner later this year and the presentation of a picture of Capt Skillicorne to the Wilson but what is the Council doing to celebrate and publicise our great 300 year anniversary? As you appear to have "some money to spend", as reported in the Echo on Easter Monday, what funding has been allocated to support festivities and anniversary events?</p>
	<p><b>Response from Cabinet Member</b></p>
	<p>I thank Councillor Nelson for his short "according to well known legend" history lesson.</p> <p>For the sake of completeness I would like to ensure that credit is given where due. Indeed Cheltenham's Civic Society together in partnership with the Friends of The Wilson are proposing to hold a Tercentenary Civic Dinner at Pittville Pump rooms on the 3rd of November, it sounds a very grand affair!</p>

	<p>I do know that the Friends of the Wilson are looking to gain support from our vibrant voluntary arts organisations. I am sure they would be grateful to hear from anyone who could help, you can email to offer your support to Chair@friendsofthewilson.org.uk</p> <p>The “picture” Councillor Nelson refers to was purchased by the Friends of the Wilson at auction recently, it had been in the ownership of the Queens Hotel where it had hung for some time. I am delighted that the Friends decided to buy it keeping an important part of Cheltenham’s history where it belongs. The portrait of Captain Henry Skillicorne will be officially handed to the Council at the Tercentenary event. Which of course means it will remain in public ownership for all to enjoy who visit the Wilson.</p> <p>As budgets have been cut back so much, it is fantastic to see two very successful voluntary organisations coming together. I wish them every success in raising the sponsorship and to see that any proceeds will go to Water Aid. I am sure this Council would like to pass on its thanks and perhaps we could ask the Leader to do this.</p> <p>This Council has a proven track record of working in effective, positive partnerships. That is why earlier in the year the Cheltenham Trust were asked to lead, they have a Cheltenham 300 years campaign plans and ideas document, which I am happy to share with you however it is work in progress which is why I have not included it.</p> <p>You can also visit the paper store at the Wilson where you will find an exhibition about Cheltenham becoming a spa town. If that is not to your taste then there is a Poetry Festival event on the 9th of May at the Strand – Chapter and Verse – Cheltenham an Alternative History with Kim Fleet and Angela France.</p> <p>You cannot always take what is reported in the media to be the complete picture. I did indeed say that there is some money I have available. What was not clear is that it is for Health Inequalities that has criteria which must be met. To answer your question “what has been allocated” you may have seen the email recently letting you know that a Cbinet Member delegated decision was taken to allocate money to the Festival of Childhood in May at the Ttown Hall and Imperial Gardens also an event in Pittville Park called Summers End, you can also find others on the Council website.</p>
<p><b>13.</b></p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Chris Nelson to Cabinet Member Housing, Peter Jeffries (Councillor Andrew McKinlay will respond to any supplementary question)</b></p>
	<p>Do you believe there is a problem with begging in Cheltenham? To the casual observer it would appear that the numbers are increasing. I appreciate that the reasons for begging are many and varied but is there a link to a shortage of suitable housing in Cheltenham? Is there enough accommodation within Cheltenham to house all those who need a bed? Is the Council doing all it can - directly and indirectly with partners - to understand and help solve this difficult issue?</p>
	<p><b>Response from Cabinet Member</b></p>

	<p>There has been an increase in street begging in recent months. Street begging is not the same as street homelessness, and usually most street beggars have their own home – although the position can change over time. The council has commissioned Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre to provide Assertive Outreach services to work with the street homeless. Anyone who is begging and homeless will be identified and supported into housing. Gloucestershire County Council commission the provision of direct access accommodation for individuals with complex needs, and the street homeless will have priority for this accommodation. In addition there is supported housing for those with high support needs which they can subsequently move into for a longer period of time, if general needs accommodation is not immediately appropriate. Both Stonham and the YMCA provide high supported accommodation for those in need. Again, these are commissioned by Gloucestershire County Council's Supporting People team.</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council's interests are represented via Supporting People's Core Strategy Group, which is made of a partnership of district authorities, probation and commissioning leads from within the county council. It is from within this partnership that the issue of street begging in Cheltenham has been raised by CBC officers. The County Council's Drugs &amp; Alcohol's commissioning lead has noted an emerging gap in service provision and is looking to plug this gap by reviewing the service contract with Turning Point (an organisation providing a drugs and alcohol treatment and support service) in order to ensure that they provide an assertive outreach approach to individuals who are begging in Cheltenham, with a view to bringing about better engagement of street beggars with drugs and alcohol treatment and support services.</p> <p>In addition to the support element, the Council is also working on taking appropriate enforcement action against street beggars who are committing anti-social behaviour. Again, this is a partnership approach involving Housing, Turning Point, CHAC and the Police. Enforcement is an area of work overseen by my Cabinet Member colleague, Councillor Andrew McKinlay. Any such enforcement action will be undertaken when street beggars are causing anti-social behaviour, particularly where they are refusing help from support and/or housing services.</p>
14.	<p><b>Question from Councillor Chris Nelson to the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman</b></p>
	<p>I understand that the Liberal Democrats gained cross party support within the County Council for a motion to improve the maintenance and care of our street trees. The Echo reported that Councillor Klara Sudbury had said: "For Cheltenham in particular street trees are such an intrinsic part of the character of our town. Given how important they are to the very fabric of Cheltenham, the importance of their maintenance cannot be overstated. Quite simply Cheltenham would not be Cheltenham without our street trees." I am sure the Cabinet Member agrees with those views but the Town also has many other trees in prominent locations that help to make the main routes into Cheltenham green and memorable. What has this Council done to protect those significant trees it has responsibility for?</p>
	<p><b>Response from</b></p>
	<p>As a proud Cheltonian, I agree wholeheartedly with Cllr Sudbury's observations at the recent meeting of Gloucestershire County Council. In particular, I believe that</p>

	<p>street trees are indeed an intrinsic part of the character of our beautiful town which has of course often been called "a town within a park".</p> <p>This administration is committed to caring for the trees that we are responsible for. Accordingly, Cheltenham Borough Council employs 2 full time Trees Officers to manage all trees on "Leisure Land" and an internal arrangement has been set up so that trees on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land are also managed by our Trees Officers.</p> <p>There are 5,000+ "Leisure" trees under routine health and safety inspection which are pruned/removed when necessary or when good arboricultural practice recommends. Cheltenham Borough Council has planted more trees than felled each year for several years. We also harness tree planting help from the Cheltenham Tree Group which is a voluntary organisation.</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council funds £15,000 annually to support Gloucestershire Highways street tree planting arrangements which, sadly, would otherwise fall well short of replacing the trees that they fell. In addition, this Council has been committed to improving working arrangements between ourselves and Gloucestershire Highways Trees Officers.</p> <p>There are also many trees on private land along main routes into Cheltenham. Where appropriate and necessary, this Council places Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on such privately owned trees.</p> <p>There are 686 TPOs within Cheltenham. A TPO could cover 1 tree, several trees, a large area (e.g. Redgrove Park) or a woodland (e.g. Cheltenham Film Studios). These trees are either within domestic gardens or in commercial sites.</p> <p>When land is to be developed and the trees within a site are not worthy of a TPO and are earmarked for removal, our Trees Officers recommend to the case planner that a Landscaping Condition including appropriate tree planting is used so as to ensure that canopy cover is maintained in a site in the longer term.</p> <p>The extensive nature of the Conservation Area within Cheltenham means that virtually all proposed tree surgery work has to be approved by Trees Officers. The voluntary Cheltenham Tree Group are formal consultees on tree work applications and comment on such applications when necessary.</p> <p>It is true to say that I, as well as other Liberal Democrat County Councillors, have become increasingly concerned about the way Gloucestershire County Council approaches the care of the trees in our town which are under their control. Any assistance that you, or other members of the Conservative Group here, could give to persuading the administration at Shire Hall to show more interest in street trees in Cheltenham would be greatly appreciated.</p>
<p><b>15.</b></p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Andrew Chard to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b></p>
	<p>Will the Leader please confirm that the current administration fully supports the proposed development of a BMX Pump Track in Burrows Field?</p>

	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	This is an interesting local initiative which was approved by the Planning Committee on 18 <sup>th</sup> February 2016. As an administration we are fully supportive of local communities working together to improve their area and so would be happy to support this proposal. Any formal request for funding to assist would be considered under the appropriate financial regulations.
<b>16.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Andrew Chard to Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor John Rawson</b>
	Will the Cabinet Member for Finance please confirm where the funding for the proposed BMX Pump Track in Burrows Field will come from and, if it is S106 money has it been allocated and when will it be available?
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	The BMX Pump Track is a community initiative which, as I understand it, aims to draw its funding from a number of sources, including County Council money. The Borough Council could consider contributing towards the scheme from Section 106 monies, subject to proper approval under financial regulations. So far no S106 money has been allocated for this purpose.